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For Immediate Release

Mayor Sharpe James' Statement on Ken Gibson

"Ken Gibson will forever remain as an historic figure, whose election as the first black mayor of a major northeastern city made it possible for legions of other young African-Americans to be elected to public office. His election as Mayor of Newark in 1970, coming after the disturbances that tore this city and much of America apart, was hailed as a new beginning for America. In taking over the reins of municipal government, he was responsible for restoring harmony in New Jersey's largest city by reaching out to all factions and asking them to come together to heal Newark and move it forward. His quiet demeanor and calm in the wake of great racial divide restored confidence in city residents and in the business community. He was viewed as a great conciliator, an individual who mended fences and restored harmony. Talented young people from Ivy League schools and top colleges and universities all over America clamored to be part of this new administration that held great hope and promise for the City of Newark and its people.

"I came into office with Ken Gibson, and although, we didn't always see eye to eye on everything, we were always friends, and he remains to this day, my Mayor. Even after I defeated him in 1986, Ken--always the great peacemaker--came to see me and extended his hand in friendship. Then he took me to the June convention of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, which he had previously served as president. He brought me around and introduced me as Newark's new mayor to his friends and fellow mayors. There was never any rancor, only the offer of help and available consultation because we always shared a common goal--the betterment of Newark and its people.

"Despite this recent spate of problems, I will never forget the friendship and support that Ken Gibson has given me throughout my public service career in the City of Newark. I hope he will be remembered for all the good things that he has done for this city and this state, not for these more recent circumstances, and I wish him well in the days ahead."